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News Release

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Minneapolis man indicted for bank fraud, identity theft

A 35-year-old Minneapolis man was indicted this week in federal court on multiple counts of bank fraud and identity theft in connection with scheme to obtain money from victims by cashing fraudulent checks at financial institutions.

Robert Demetrius Johnson was charged July 14 in Minneapolis with one count of bank fraud conspiracy; four counts of bank fraud; two counts of identity theft; and two counts of aggravated identity theft. His indictment was unsealed yesterday following his arrest in Brooklyn Park.

Johnson's indictment alleges that from Jan. 1, 2008, to July 2, 2008, he and others did knowingly conspire to execute and attempt to execute a scheme to defraud financial institutions, namely TCF Bank, Associated Bank, Guaranty Bank and Anchor Bank, and to obtain, by means of false and fraudulent pretenses and representations, funds owned and under the control of financial institutions. The indictment also alleges that in furtherance of the scheme Johnson did engage in certain acts on Feb. 29, May 29 and twice on May 16.

Johnson, the indictment alleges, did knowingly transfer and use without lawful authority a means of identification of another person with the intent to commit the bank fraud, and as a result of the offense, Johnson obtained a thing of value aggregating \$1,000 or more during a one-year period. Specifically, Johnson obtained \$54,000 from two banks on May 7-8.

The indictment also alleges that on May 6 and May 8 Johnson did knowingly transfer, possess and use without lawful authority a means of identification of another person in relation to the bank fraud on May 6 and May 8.

The purpose of the scheme, the indictment alleges, was to unlawfully obtain checks written to payee companies for payment of services. These checks were all forwarded to the same check processing company, located in Boston. The scheme also included acquiring the personal identification information of victims who reside both in and outside of Minnesota, and to file applications for and obtain certificates of assumed company names through the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office. Those company names were similar to those who had submitted

checks to the Boston check processing company.

Johnson would allegedly open personal and business bank accounts using the victims' identification information and the assumed company names, and Johnson would allegedly deposit checks into the opened bank accounts and later withdraw the monies. The total loss is more than \$300,000.

If convicted, Johnson faces a potential maximum penalty of 30 years in prison on the conspiracy count; 30 years on each bank fraud count; 15 years on each identity theft count; and a two-year minimum mandatory imprisonment on each aggravated identity theft count. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Wayzata Police Department, the Minnesota Financial Crimes Task Force, the Brooklyn Park Police Department and the U.S. Secret Service. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Leshia Lee-Dixon.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.